



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Yellowstone National Park

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Yellowstone National Park News Release

U.S. DISTRICT COURT ISSUES ORDER ON WINTER USE IN YELLOWSTONE AND GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARKS AND THE JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER, JR., MEMORIAL PARKWAY

On Tuesday December 16, 2003, Judge Emmet Sullivan of the U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C. issued an order to set aside a recent National Park Service (NPS) winter use plan and rule that allowed for limited snowmobile use in Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Memorial Parkway. The November 18, 2002, regulation is in effect. That rule phases out snowmobile use in the three parks in favor of multi-passenger snowcoaches.

The decision to phase out snowmobile use was signed in a November 2000 Record of Decision (ROD), with the rule to implement that decision signed in January 2001. The rule called for the gradual phase out of all recreational snowmobile use by the winter season of 2003-2004 in favor of NPS-managed mass transit snowcoaches. The November 18, 2002 rule delayed the implementation of this decision for one year to allow the NPS to complete the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement and plan for the transition to mass-transit snowcoaches.

As scheduled, the parks will open for the winter season at 7:00 a.m. on December 17, 2003. Park visitor centers and warming huts will be open, and park concessioners will provide lodging, food services, and other services to the public. In Yellowstone, visitors will be able to access the park through existing commercial snowmobile or snowcoach operators. A list of businesses permitted to provide specialized winter services is available on Yellowstone's web site at www.nps.gov/yell/planvisit/services/wintbusn.htm.

This winter season, under the November 18, 2002 regulation, daily snowmobile use will be set at levels that are expected to lead to an approximately 50 percent reduction from historic use levels—to 493 for Yellowstone; 50 for Grand Teton and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Memorial Parkway. All snowmobiles that enter Yellowstone will be required to be accompanied by an NPS-permitted guide and travel in groups of no more than eleven, including the guide. Snowmobile use will be prohibited within Grand Teton National Park except on the Continental Divide Snowmobile Trail and on access routes leading to private lands and adjacent national forest lands. There will be no best available technology requirements for snowmobiles. All oversnow motorized travel is prohibited from 9:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. except by authorization.

Effective the winter of 2004-2005, oversnow motorized recreation access to the three parks will be by NPS-managed snowcoach only, with limited exceptions for continued snowmobile access to other public and private lands adjacent to or within Grand Teton National Park.

"We are prepared to carry out whatever decision comes out of this process," Yellowstone Superintendent Suzanne Lewis noted. "We remain focused on meeting the mission of the National Park Service and implementing programs and operations that protect, preserve, and educate the public about park resources. We will continue to

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do all we can to keep park visitors, neighboring communities, and the public informed about winter use and how to visit the parks in the winter.”

Current information on winter use is available by calling (307) 344-2580 and on the park’s web site at www.nps.gov/yell.

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